

# OBITUARIES

## Former CIA Director William Raborn Jr. Dies

By Bart Barnes  
Washington Post Staff Writer

William Francis Raborn Jr., 84, a retired Navy vice admiral who later served 14 months as director of central intelligence in 1965 and 1966, died of cardiac arrest March 6 at Sibley Memorial Hospital.

Adm. Raborn served 39 years in the Navy before his retirement in 1963. As a military officer, he was known chiefly for his role in managing the development of the Polaris missile. He had a reputation as an inventive thinker and a careful administrator, and he was picked by Adm. Arleigh A. Burke, chief of naval operations, for the critical Polaris assignment in 1955 because of his background as a naval aviator and an ability to get along with people under difficult and stressful circumstances.

A red-headed, barrel-chested and jovial sailor, Adm. Raborn was widely admired in both houses of Congress for his management of the development of the Polaris, the solid-fuel missile capable of being launched from a submerged submarine.

When John A. McCone stepped down as director of central intelligence in 1965, President Johnson named Adm. Raborn to head the agency. Johnson confided to associates that the admiral's standing on Capitol Hill could only facilitate the agency's mission.

At the same time, the president appointed Richard M. Helms, a CIA veteran, as the agency's deputy director. In many technical matters at the CIA, Adm. Raborn relied on Helms's judgment. But there also were complaints within the CIA that Adm. Raborn's military background and his reputation for getting along with Congress were insufficient qualifications for the delicate and sensitive job of supervising and coordinating the nation's intelligence effort. In June 1966, Helms replaced Adm. Raborn as director of central intelligence.

A resident of McLean, Adm. Raborn was born in Decatur, Tex., and grew up in Marlow, Okla. He never saw the sea until 1924, when he arrived in Annapolis as a midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy.

After his graduation in 1928, he served aboard the battleship Texas, then on destroyers until 1933, when he was assigned to flight training at the U.S. Naval Air Station at Pensacola, Fla. He became a naval aviator the following year, then participated in experimental cold weather cruises to Alaska. Later, he was a flight instructor at Pensacola.

Early in World War II, he helped establish an aviation gunnery school in Hawaii. In 1944, he became executive officer of the aircraft carrier Hancock, serving aboard that ship during the Iwo Jima, Okinawa and other campaigns of the Pacific war. He received a Silver Star for his role in directing firefighting operations when an enemy bomb exploded on the Hancock's flight deck on April 7, 1945.

In 1949 and 1950, Adm. Raborn was assigned to the Navy's Bureau of Ordnance in Washington, where he worked on research and development of guided missiles. Subsequent duty included shore and sea assignments, including anti-submarine warfare in the Far East and command of the aircraft carrier Bennington, which underwent a series of violent explosions while conducting air operations 75 miles south of Newport, R.I., on May 26, 1954. There were 220 casualties resulting from those explosions. Adm. Raborn received a letter of commendation for his role in directing removal of the injured and fighting of the fires.

As director of the development of Polaris missiles, he was said to have brought the energy of a sports coach and the enthusiasm of an evangelist to the assignment, and he was known for the pep talks he delivered around the country at the

plants and factories where materials for the new weapon were produced. His style of administration was to work with a small group of subordinates, including one whose principal assignment was to search for talent, and he was a firm believer in the management policy that an overworked small staff was generally more productive than an underworked large one.

Adm. Raborn retired from the Navy in 1963 as deputy chief of naval operations for development, then served as vice president in charge of management of Aerojet-General Corp. in California until he was named to head the intelligence agency.

After leaving the agency, he returned to Aerojet-General in the

Washington office for three years, then served as president of his own consulting firm, W.F. Raborn Co. Inc., here until retiring again in 1986.

Survivors include his wife, Mildred T. Raborn of McLean; two children, Priscilla Richardson and W.F. Raborn III, both of California; three brothers; and four grandchildren.

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